

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0000

INFO AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO

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AMCONSUL SAO PAULO

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CARACAS FOR MARATT

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ETRN, VE

SUBJECT: MARITIME AFFAIRS: INTRODUCTION OF LASH SERVICE

REF: A. BA 5976, B. CARACAS 8007

1. SUMMARY. LASH VESSEL, DELTA MAR'S SECOND VISIT TO BA GENERATED FLURRY OF OPPOSITION SIMILAR TO FIRST VISIT. HOWEVER, DIFFICULTIES TEMPORARILY RESOLVED AND DELTA MAR UNLOADED AND LOADED CLOSE TO ORIGINAL SCHEDULE. SITUATION FOR FUTURE LASH OPERATIONS IN ARGENTINA REMAINS CLOUDED. END SUMMARY

2. AFTER PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED IN OPERATION OF INAUGURAL LASH VESSEL VISIT TO BA AUG 9-13, REPORTED REFTEL A, DELTA LINES REP SOUGHT MAKE CAREFUL AND EARLY PREPARATION FOR AVOIDANCE SIMILAR DIFFICULTIES ON SECOND VISIT DELTA MAR SEP 20. DURING FIRST TEN DAYS SEP, HE REPORTS, ALL APPROPRIATE ARGENTINE OFFICIALS HAD BEEN CONTACTED WITH RESULT THAT ASSURANCES WERE ON HAND THAT GOA HAD NO OBJECTIONS TO CONTINUED LASH OPERATIONS. MOREOVER, SINCE PLAN FOR SECOND VISIT CONTEMPLATED BRINGING

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DELTA MAR INTO BA PORT, ELMA LINES HAD INDICATED NOT ONLY LACK OF

OPPOSITION BUT HAD OFFERED ESPECIALLY GOOD FACILITIES IN ITS RESERVED AREA OF PORT FOR USE OF DELTA MAR.

3. ABOUT SEP 13 DELTA LINES REP RECEIVED INDICATIONS SMALL UNION OF MECHANICS WORKING STATE ENTERPRISE TUGS AGAIN STIRRING UP POT AND SEEKING BLOCK OPERATION LASH. MINISTER OF LABOR AND UNDER-SECRETARY MARITIME AFFAIRS RECEIVED LABOR UNION REPS SEP 14. WE UNDERSTAND THAT IN DISCUSSIONS GOA OFFICIALS INDICATED TO UNION THAT NO LEGAL OR ECONOMIC BASIS FOR OPPOSITION TO LASH OPERATION APPEARED TO EXIST. (DELTA LINES HAD PREVIOUSLY PROVED TO SAME GOA OFFICIALS THAT MORE INCOME I.E. PAYMENT FOR LABOR AND SERVICES, GENERATED IN BA PORT FROM LASH VESSEL VISIT THAN FROM VISIT CONVENTIONAL VESSELS.)

4. UNDERSECRETARY FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS INDICATED TO ALL CONCERNED HE WAS PREPARED ISSUE RESOLUTION SPECIFICALLY AUTHORIZING CONTINUED LASH OPERATIONS. REPORTEDLY UNION REPS THEN STATED THAT BECAUSE LASH OPERATION WAS QUOTE NEW TECHNOLOGY CONSTITUTING IMPERAILISTIC PENETRATION UNQUOTE UNION WOULD REFUSE WORK DESPITE ANY RESOLUTION SO ISSUED.

5. IN FACE OF UNION DEFIANCE, IN SITUATION DESCRIBED, UNDER-SECRETARY FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS BACKED OFF AND PROPOSED THAT HIS RESOLUTION WOULD COVER ONLY DELTA MAR VISIT SCHEDULED SEP 20. REPORTS TO US ARE VAGUE BUT SEEM TO INDICATE THAT GOA OFFICIALS MADE SOME SORT OF COMMITMENT TO TAKE MATTER TO CONGRESS FOLLOWING ELECTIONS IN ARGENTINA SEP 23. SUCH ORAL REPORTS GO SO FAR AS TO INDICATE GOA OFFICIALS' PROMISED NOT TO ALLOW FUTURE LASH OPERATIONS UNTIL CONGRESS HAS MADE A DECISION ON WHETHER TO PERMIT THEM ON A PERMANENT BASIS. WE HAVE EVEN HEARD THAT IT WAS MINISTER OF ECONOMY GELBARD WHO MADE DECISION AND EXTENDED THESE REPORTED COMMITMENTS.

6. ON BASIS OF COMPROMISE DESCRIBED, UNDERSECRETARY FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS IN MINISTRY OF ECONOMY REPORTEDLY SIGNED RESOLUTION SEP 19 AUTHORIZING OPERATION LASH VESSEL DELTA MAR ON CURRENT VOYAGE. DELTA MAR ARRIVED OUTER END BA PORT CHANNEL AFTERNOON SEP 19. FOLLOWING COMPROMISE DESCRIBED ABOVE OPERATIONS FOR DISCHARGING AND LOADING MOVED VERY SMOOTHLY SEP 20, AND DELTA MAR HAS DEPARTED NORTHBOUND.

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7. EMBASSY WAS FOLLOWING PROBLEM CLOSELY WITH DELTA LINES REP DURING LAST TEN DAYS. WHEN ARRIVAL DELTA MAR WAS IMMINENT, AND POSSIBLE COMPROMISE NOT YET REACHED, EMBASSY SOUGHT, EARLY SEP 19, TO INTEREST APPROPRIATE OFFICIALS FONOFF IN SECURING PROMPT GOA ACTION TO AVOID IMPASSE AND DELAY OF VESSEL. IN THIS WAY, UNDERSECRETARY FOR INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC AFFAIRS TETTAMANTI WAS AWARE OF POSSIBLE PROBLEM AND, WE UNDERSTND, DISCUSSED MATTER

WITH MINISTER OF ECONOMY AND UNDERSECRETARY FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS ON SEP 19. WHEN DCM AND ECON COUNSELOR CALLED ON TETTAMANTI SEP 20, PRIMARILY IN RELATION WITH OTHER MATTERS, TETTAMANTI REPORTED LASH VESSEL PROBLEM APPEARED SOLVED AND THAT HE AND OTHER GOA OFFICIALS WERE PLEASED THAT APPROPRIATE SOLUTION HAD BEEN POSSIBLE. BECAUSE NEITHER WE NOR DELTA LINES HAS ACTUALLY SEEN UNDERSECRETARIAT FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS RESOLUTION OF SEP 19, EMBOFF QUERIED TETTAMANTI CONCERNING RESTRICTIONS OR LIMITATIONS OF THAT RESOLUTION VIS-A-VIS FUTURE LASH OPERATIONS. OUR CONCERN WE INDICATED, WAS BASED ON FACT SECOND VESSEL DEL NORTE ALREADY ENROUTE SOUTHBOUND AND DUE BA ON OR ABOUT OCT 5. TETTAMANTI IMMEDIATELY TELEPHONED HIS COUNTERPART IN MARITIME AFFAIRS AND SUBSEQUENTLY CONFIRMED RESOLUTION REFERS ONLY TO PRESENT VISIT DELTA MAR. HE INDICATED, HOWEVER, THAT THERE WAS NOTHING IN THE RESOLUTION TO SPECIFICALLY BAR FUTURE LASH VESSEL OPERATIONS. TETTAMANTI CONFIRMED THAT THERE IS GENERAL APPROVAL AMONG GOA OFFICIALS FOR CONTINUED LASH VESSEL OPERATIONS, BUT ONE MUST ADMIT THERE IS A LABOR/POLITICAL PROBLEM SUCH AS FREQUENTLY OCCURS IN MANY PORTS IN MANY COUNTRIES. HE INDICATED HOPE, IF NOT GREAT CONFIDENCE, THAT FOLLOWING ARGENTINE ELECTIONS SUCH PROBLEMS WILL BE EASIER TO HANDLE.

8. COMMENT. NEITHER WE NOR DELTA LINES HAVE AS YET UNEARTHED ORIGIN OF POSSIBLY POLITICALLY INSPIRED UNION OPPOSITION TO LASH, ESPECIALLY AS SPEARHEADED BY TUG MECHANICS WHO, ECONOMICALLY,

STAND TO GAIN CONSIDERABLY FROM LASH OPERATIONS. WE WILL CONTINUE TO TRY TO DO SO. UNTIL FOCUS OF OPPOSITION IS IDENTIFIED AND ITS EFFORTS COUNTERED BY DELTA LINES OR GOA ACTIONS, EACH LASH VESSEL VISIT PROMISES TO BE A MINI CRISIS.
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